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(54) (TITLE OF THE INVENTION) Publishing system and method for same

(57) (ABSTRACT)

(PROBLEM) To obtain publications of a sort not found in the prior art, which allow consumers to enjoy reading books and which have an interactivity that allows the consumers themselves to post information.

(MEANS FOR SOLVING) The system comprises a posting forum provision means 4 which publicly presents a theme for discussion and debate over a communication network 2 and publicly solicits the posting of opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like relating to the theme, with notice being given to the effect that the opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like will be published without correction in book form once a certain number thereof has been contributed; a posted data storage means 5 which stores the posted data transmitted from an information processing terminal 3 connected via the communication network; and a publishing means 6 which collects the posted data and generates a publication 7.

[see source for figure]

(SCOPE OF PATENT CLAIMS)

(CLAIM 1) A publishing system characterized in that it comprises: a posting forum provision means which publicly presents a theme for discussion and debate over a communication network and publicly solicits the posting of opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like relating to said theme, with notice being given to the effect that the opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like will be published without correction in book form once a certain number thereof has been contributed; a posted data storage means which stores the posted data transmitted from an information processing terminal connected via the communication network; and a publishing means which collects the posted data and generates a publication.

(CLAIM 2) A publishing system as set forth in Claim 1, characterized in that said posted data storage means allows transmission from said information processing terminal once certain user information has been input along with the posted data, and stores the user information along with the posted data.

(CLAIM 3) A publishing system as set forth in Claim 1 or 2, characterized in that said posting forum provision means publicly solicits the themes for discussion and debate.

(CLAIM 4) A publishing method characterized in that a theme for discussion and debate is publicly presented over a communication network; opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like relating to said theme are publicly solicited, with notice being given to the effect that the opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like will be published without correction in book form once a certain number thereof has been contributed; and said posted data contributed from an information processing terminal utilizing said communication network is collected and published together in a publication.

(DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION)

(0001)

(TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION) The present invention relates to a pushing system and method. More specifically, the present invention relates to a publishing system and method utilizing a communication network.

(0002)

(PRIOR ART) In the prior art, posting and viewing systems have been brought into use on communication networks as typified by the Internet. In such posting and viewing systems, postings from individuals are accepted and publicly presented on the Internet in the manner of a bulletin board, facilitating communication between the poster and viewers who view the post. Such systems enjoy success, attracting many postings and being accessed many times for viewing of the postings.

(0003)

(PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED BY THE INVENTION) However, in posting and viewing systems, the information described in the postings is updated by the minute, so the character of such systems is that the viewer browses through the information, rather than enjoying the close reading or rereading of the text in the manner of reading a book.

(0004) On the other hand, when reading a bound book, the text can be enjoyed as a work, but in this case there is no interactivity whereby the viewer can post information as in a posting and viewing system.

(0005) Thus, the object of the present invention is to provide a publishing system and method which utilizes the interactiv-

ity of a communication network to obtain publications of a sort not found in the prior art, which allow consumers to enjoy reading books and which have an interactivity that allows the consumers themselves to post information.

(0006)

(MEANS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM) To achieve this object, the publishing system according to the invention described in Claim 1 comprises: a posting forum provision means which publicly presents a theme for discussion and debate over a communication network and publicly solicits the posting of opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like relating to said theme, with notice being given to the effect that the opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like will be published without correction in book form once a certain number thereof has been contributed; a posted data storage means which stores the posted data transmitted from an information processing terminal connected via the communication network; and a publishing means which collects the posted data and generates a publication. Furthermore, in the publishing method described in Claim 4, a theme for discussion and debate is publicly presented over a communication network; opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like relating to said theme are publicly solicited, with notice being given to the effect that the opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like will be published without correction in book form once a certain number thereof has been contributed; and the posted data contributed from an information processing terminal utilizing said communication network is collected and published together in a publication.

(0007) Contributors of posted data have strong feelings, in form of opinions, assertions, experiences, and the like, relating to the theme of the posted data, and have a particularly strong interest in what opinions others may have, what others may think or what experiences others may have had. However, since the theme is publicly presented and a posting forum is provided via the communication network, while the opinions, assertions, experiences, etc. of others are not publicly presented over the communication network but are rather published together in a publication, a contributor's desire to know what opinions others have is not satisfied until the contributor purchases the publication in question. Therefore, it becomes possible to strongly stimulate the contributor's desire to purchase the publication in which opinions on the publicly presented theme are collected and published.

(0008) At the same time, the curiosity of persons who do not contribute with regard to various people's opinions, assertions, and experiences on the publicly solicited theme is also highly stimulated. Moreover, if persons who did not know of the public solicitation see the publication in question in a bookstore or the like, since they will without exception have their own opinions, assertions, experiences, etc. relating to the theme of debate, a strong interest will be aroused in them as to what others may be thinking about the matter. Therefore, such persons' desire to purchase the publication in which opinions, etc. on the publicly presented theme of discussion and debate are collected and published can also be strongly stimulated.

(0009) Moreover, since a posting forum is provided for the publicly solicited theme, persons who have an interest in or opinions on that theme will actively access the posting forum provision means and contribute their opinions, etc., and will purchase the publication in which those opinions are taken up

and published. This can in turn make the existence of the posting forum provision means more widely known among consumers, increasing accesses and contributions of opinions, etc., and making the system more complete.

(0010) Furthermore, the invention described in Claim 2 is a publishing system as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the posted data storage means allows transmission from said information processing terminal once certain user information has been input along with the posted data, and stores the user information along with the posted data. In this case, it becomes possible to send published books, published book tables of contents, back numbers, and the like to the stored users.

(0011) Furthermore, the invention described in Claim 3 is a publishing system as set forth in Claim 1 or 2, wherein the posting forum provision means publicly solicits the themes for discussion and debate. In this case, it becomes possible to gather themes for discussion and debate in which persons accessing the posting forum, i.e. the provision means, are broadly interested, thus allowing for more active collection of more meaningful opinions.

(0012)

(EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION) The constitution of the present invention is described in more detail below based on the embodiments illustrated in the drawings.

(0013) Figures 1 through 3 illustrate an embodiment of the publishing system of the present invention. This publishing system 1 comprises a posting forum provision means 4 which publicly presents a theme for discussion and debate over a communication network 2 and publicly solicits the posting of opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like relating to the theme, with notice being given to the effect that the opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like will be published without correction in book form once a certain number thereof has been contributed; a posted data storage means 5 which stores the posted data transmitted from an information processing terminal 3 connected via the communication network 2; and a publishing means 6 which collects the posted data and generates a publication 7.

(0014) For the communication network 2 in the present embodiment, it is preferable to employ the so-called Internet, which is a grouping of computer networks. This makes it possible for the publishing system 1 to solicit opinions, assertion, experiential accounts, etc. on a theme from an unspecified large number of information processing terminals 3. Below, in the present embodiment, the communication network 2 will be referred to as the Internet 2.

(0015) As the communication means between the provision means 4 and information viewing terminals 3 on the Internet 2, it is easy and preferable to use the known technology of a WWW (World Wide Web) system based on WWW servers and WWW browsers.

(0016) The posting forum provision means 4 in the present embodiment may be implemented for instance by executing software that functions as a WWW server, using a computer equipped with hardware resources such as a central process-

ing unit, main memory, auxiliary memory, communication interface and input/output interface, and an operating system which controls these hardware resources. The posting forum provision means 4 (referred to hereafter in the present embodiment as WWW server 4) is connected to the communication network 2, i.e. the Internet 2.

(0017) The information processing terminal 3 in the present embodiment is for example a personal computer which comprises hardware resources such as a central processing unit, main memory, auxiliary memory, communication interface, input/output interface, keyboard, mouse or other pointing device, and a display, and an operating system that controls these hardware resources, and has a WWW browser function which makes it possible to view the information provided by the WWW server 4. The information processing terminal 3 (referred to hereafter in the present embodiment as client 3) is connected to the Internet 2. This makes it possible for the user of the client 3 (referred to hereafter in the present embodiment as user) to access the WWW server 4 through the Internet 2 using the client 3.

(0018) The mode of connection for connecting the WWW server 4 and client 3 to the Internet is not particularly restricted. For example, by using a prescribed communication interface, one could employ the public switched telephone network, or a dedicated communication line such as OCN (Open Computer Network), or ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network), ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line), or data communication of a portable telephone via a base station. Furthermore, a connection to the Internet 2 can be made via Internet protocol.

(0019) The WWW server 4, for example, uses known WWW system functions to store a plurality of web pages in HTML format linked by a hypertext function, and transmits to the client 3 the web pages requested by the client 3 via the Internet 2.

(0020) For example, on the WWW server 4 of the present embodiment, the web pages stored include a web page which publicly presents a theme for discussion and debate and state that opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, etc. relating to that theme will be published without correction in book form once a certain number of them has been contributed (referred to hereafter in the present embodiment as theme declaration page) and a web page 8 (referred to hereafter in the present embodiment as posting page 8) for posting of opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, etc. by the user. The web pages stored on the WWW server 4 are not limited hereto. For example, web pages explaining the theme and web pages explaining the publishing system 1 may be prepared and linked as appropriate by means of hypertext functions.

(0021) The theme for discussion and debate is not limited to a single theme. For example, a plurality of themes can of course be established so that users can post about the themes which they like. In the present embodiment, for example, three themes will be publicly presented on the theme declaration

page. Furthermore, in addition to soliciting opinions, assertions, and experiential accounts on the themes, one may at the same time solicit themes which users want to be taken up. This makes it possible to collect themes which the operator of the publishing system 1 cannot come up with, or themes for discussion and debate which the users accessing the WWW server 4 are widely interested in, making it possible to gather more active and meaningful opinions, etc. In the publishing system 1 of the present embodiment, users' opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, etc. on each theme are solicited to be for instance 400 characters or less, picturing a concise and articulate short story.

(0022) The posted data storage means 5 in the present embodiment is for example a computer having a data base function which acts in coordination with the WWW server 4 and stores the posted data. As the coordinating function between the WWW server 4 and the posted data storage means 5, one can employ functions used in known WWW systems, such as launching a GCI (Common Gateway Interface) via the posting page 8 or including a prescribed script in the posting page 8.

(0023) An example of the posting page 8 of the present embodiment is shown in Figure 2. On the posting page 8, for example, the user uses a client 3 to enter opinions, assertions or experiential accounts in the text area 9 provided on the posting page 8, and clicks the send button 10 provided on the same posting page 8, whereupon the posted data entered into the text area 9 is sent to the WWW server 4 and stored in the posted data storage means 5 (referred to hereafter in the present embodiment as posting database 5). The content entered on the posting page 8 may also be deleted by the user by pressing the cancel button 12.

(0024) Now, one could for example have the user post opinions, assertions, and experiential accounts on a theme to the electronic mail address of the publishing system 1. In this case, the mail inbox of the publishing system 1 becomes the posted data storage means 5. One may also for instance link the email server and posting database 5 of the publishing system 1 using an API (Application Program Interface), with the posted data received by the mail inbox of the publishing system 1 being automatically forwarded to and stored in the posting database 5.

(0025) Furthermore, on posting page 8 of the present embodiment, as shown in frame 11 of Figure 2, the user is made to enter information such as the user's "name" or "pseudonym (pen name)," "age," "gender," "profession," "email address," "address," "interests" and "selected theme number" (referred to hereafter in the present embodiment as user information), which is sent together with the posted data to the WWW server 4 and stored in the posting database 5. To this end, for example, on the posting page 8, one may provide text boxes allowing the user to enter his "name" or "pseudonym (pen name)," "email address," "address" and "selected theme

number," a drop-down box that allows selection of the "occupation," and check boxes that allow selection of "gender" and "interests." This makes it possible, for example, collate opinions, assertions, and experiential accounts by theme as well as by gender, age, or other user segment by performing database operations on the posting database 5 in which the posted data is stored. It is also possible to send publications, lists of publications, back numbers, etc. to stored users. The user information collected is not limited to that mentioned above.

(0026) Furthermore, in cases where themes which users want to have taken up are solicited along with opinions, assertions, and experiential accounts on a theme, for example, the posting page 8 can be used also for posting by users of themes which the users want to have taken up. In this case, the "selected theme number" can be left blank or a prescribed symbol can be entered to distinguish it from posted data.

(0027) Publishing means 6 of the present embodiment can be implemented by means of a so-called CAP (Computer Aided Publishing) system wherein the content of the posting database 5 is edited on a computer 6a, and the edited posted data is output as publication 7 on a book-binding device 6b. This makes it possible to link the posting database 5 and the publishing means 6, so that the opinions, assertions, and experiential accounts can be easily edited and bound.

(0028) Furthermore, although the posted data is as a rule published as-is, adding only a brief review, or the like, if necessary, typographic errors, omissions, and the like may be corrected. For example, typographical errors and the like in the posted data may be automatically corrected by running spell-checking software. The edited posted data may also be for instance transmitted via the Internet 2 to a book-binding company or the like which has a CAP system and bound into a book at the book-binding company or the like.

(0029) For example, in the publishing system 1 of the present embodiment, when postings have been received from 100 users, the submitted opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like are bound and published without corrections. Furthermore, when editing the submitted opinions, assertions, experiential accounts and the like, a few words or impressions may be added to each user's work by way of a brief review. Having been bound into books as described above, the publications 7 are distributed as products. Thus, users who have contributed opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, and the like can purchase a publication 7 consisting of their own opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, etc. on a given theme, as well as the opinions, assertions, and experiential accounts of others on the same theme.

(0030) Next, an example of the flow from solicitation of posted data until publishing in the publishing system 1 configured as above will be described. Figure 3 illustrates the flow of data transmission/reception and processing between the client 3, WWW server 4, and posting database 5 in chronological order.

(0031) First, on the WWW server 4 connected to the Internet 2, the “theme for discussion and debate,” a statement to the effect that “opinions, assertions, and experiential accounts on the theme are being solicited from users” and a statement to the effect that “opinions, assertions, and experiential accounts on the theme will be published without correction in book form once submissions have been received from 100 users” are placed on the theme declaration page (step 1). The theme is not limited to a single theme: in the present embodiment, for example, three themes are prepared, allowing the user to select the desired theme which that user feels strongly about in terms of opinions, assertions, experiences, and the like.

(0032) The client 3 accesses the URL address of the theme declaration page of publishing system 1, for instance from a search engine on the Internet 2 (step 2). In response, the WWW server 4 transmits the data of the theme declaration page to the client 3 (step 3). Consequently, the theme declaration page is displayed on the client 3 side (step 4).

(0033) When a user views the theme declaration page and has interest in a given theme and wishes to post an opinion, assertion, experiential account, or the like, the user for instance clicks on prescribed characters or the like which are linked to the posting page 8 by means of a hypertext function. As a result, the client 3 transmits a view request for the posting page 8 to the WWW server 4 (step 5). In response, the WWW server 4 transmits the data of the posting page 8 to the client 3 (step 6). Consequently, the posting page 8 is displayed on the client 3 side (step 7).

(0034) In addition to the theme declaration page and posting page 8, web pages explaining the themes and web pages explaining the publishing system 1 may also be prepared on the WWW server 4 and linked as appropriate by means of a hypertext function. Furthermore, the theme declaration page and posting page 8 can be combined to create a single web page.

(0035) Then, on the posting page 8, the user enters an opinion, assertion, experiential account, or the like on the theme and enters the user information (step 8), and then clicks the send button 10, causing the posted data and user information to be sent to the WWW server 4 (step 9). Here, on the WWW server 4 side, a format check and the like can be performed on the posted data and user information, and an error message can be transmitted to the client 3 if there are problems. If the posted data and user information are proper, communication is carried out between the WWW server 4 and posting database 5 (step 10), and the posted data and user information are stored in the posting database 5 (step 11). Furthermore, after the data has been stored in the posting database 5, a storage notification can be transmitted from the posting database 5 to the WWW server 4 (step 12), a receipt notification to the effect that the posted data was received without problems can be transmitted from the WWW server 4 which received the

storage notification in question to the client 3 (step 13), and the receipt notification can be displayed on the client 3 side (step 14).

(0036) While the user is entering the opinion, assertion, experiential account, etc. (during step 8 and step 9), the client 3 and WWW server 4 do not have to be constantly on-line. For example, after receiving the posting page 8, the user can temporarily disconnect the client 3 from the Internet 2, enter the opinion, assertion, experiential account, etc. and the user information into the posting page 8, and then reconnect to the Internet 2 and click the send button 10 on the posting page 8 to transmit the posted data and user information to the WWW server 4. Furthermore, for example, one could publish the email address of the publishing system 1 on the theme declaration page and have the user transmit the posted data and user information to the mail inbox of the publishing system 1 by electronic mail.

(0037) In this way, posted data and user information are accumulated in the posting database 5. Then, for instance after postings have been received from 100 users, the publishing means 6 sorts the submitted posted data by theme, for example, leaving the posted data without corrections as a rule, except for the elimination of typographical errors, omissions, and the like. A few words or impressions are added as a brief review to each item of posted data, and the result is output to the book-binding device 6b and bound as publication 7. The editing operation on the publishing means 6 can be semi-automated by scheduling and automatically executing a program which executes prescribed database operations and spell-checking software on a computer 6a. Furthermore, the edited posted data may be transmitted via the Internet 2 to a book-binding company, etc. which has a CAP system to have the book-binding done at the book-binding company, etc.

(0038) The bound publication 7 is published and distributed as a product as described above.

(0039) Users posting to the publishing system 1 have strong feelings, in the form of opinions, assertions, experiences, and the like, relating to the theme of the posted data, and have a particularly strong interest in what opinions others may have, what others may think or what experiences others may have had. However, while on publishing system 1 the theme is publicly presented and a posting forum is provided via the Internet 2 on WWW server 4, the opinions, assertions, experiences, etc. of others are not publicly presented over the Internet 2 but are rather published together in a publication 7. Thus, the desire of a contributing user to know what opinions others have is not satisfied until the user purchases publication 7. Therefore, it becomes possible to strongly stimulate the desire of contributing users to purchase the publication 7. By purchasing the publication 7, a contributing user gains the satisfaction of having his opinions, assertions, experiences,

etc. included in the publication 7, and is able to read about the opinions, assertions, experiences, etc. of others on the same theme as the theme on which the user has opinions, assertions, experiences, etc.

(0040) At the same time, the curiosity of users who did not contribute as to what opinions, assertions, and experiences on the publicly solicited theme various people had is also highly stimulated. Moreover, if persons who did not know of the public solicitation see the publication in question in a bookstore or the like, since they will without exception have their own opinions, assertions, experiences, etc. relating to the theme of debate, a strong interest will be aroused in them as to what others may be thinking about the matter. Therefore, such persons' desire to purchase publication 7 can also be strongly stimulated.

(0041) Moreover, since a posting forum continues to be provided by the WWW server 4, users who have an interest in or opinions on that theme will actively access the WWW server 4 and contribute their opinions, etc., and will purchase the publication 7 in which those opinions are taken up once it is published. This can also make the existence of the WWW server 4 more widely known among consumers, increasing accesses and contributions of opinions, etc., and making the system more complete.

(0042) In this way, it becomes possible to provide a publication 7 of a sort not found in the prior art, which allows consumers of the publication 7 to enjoy reading a book while providing interactivity that allows the consumers themselves to post information via the Internet 2 using a client 3.

(0043) The embodiment described above is one preferred embodiment of the present invention, which however is not limited thereto, with various modified embodiments being possible so long as they do not depart from the gist of the present invention.

(0044) For example, the publications 7 produced by the publishing system 1 are not limited to bound books using paper as medium, and can be also published for instance using the medium of a CD-ROM or the like on the basis of the posted data.

(0045) Furthermore, one can for instance solicit reviews of the published publication 7 from users on the WWW server 4, and present a prize for users whose opinions, assertions, experiences, and the like received high reviews.

(0046)

(EFFECT OF THE INVENTION) As is clear from the foregoing description, the publishing system described in Claim 1 and the publishing method described in Claim 4 provide a posting forum on a publicly solicited theme via a communication network, but do not publicly present the opinions, assertions and experiences of other people over the communication network, rather publishing them together in a publication, thus making it possible to stimulate the sense of satisfaction of having one's own opinions, assertions, experiences, etc. included in the publication, and the interest and curiosity of wanting to find out the opinions, assertions, experiences, etc. of other people on the theme in question, thereby strongly exciting the desire to purchase the publication. At the same time, the curiosity of users who did not contribute as to what opinions, assertions, and

experiences on the publicly solicited theme various people had is also stimulated, making it possible to strongly excite the desire to purchase the publication in such users as well. Moreover, since persons who did not know of the public solicitation will without exception have their own opinions, assertions, experiences, etc. relating to the theme of debate, when they see the publication in question in a bookstore or the like, a strong interest will be aroused in them, making it possible to strongly stimulate their desire to purchase the publication.

(0047) Moreover, since a posting forum is provided for the publicly solicited theme, persons who have an interest in or opinions on that theme will actively access the posting forum provision means and contribute their opinions, etc., and will purchase the publication in which those opinions are taken up and published. This can in turn make the existence of the posting forum provision means more widely known among consumers, increasing accesses and contributions of opinions, etc., and making the system more complete.

(0048) Therefore, it becomes possible to provide a publication of a sort not found in the prior art, which allows consumers to enjoy reading a book while providing interactivity that allows the consumers themselves to post information.

(0049) Furthermore, in the publishing system described in Claim 2, the posted data storage means allows transmission from an information processing terminal once certain user information has been input along with the posted data, and stores the user information along with the posted data, thus making it possible to send published books, published book tables of contents, back numbers, and the like to the stored users. Furthermore, this makes it possible to collect opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, etc. by theme as well as by gender, age, or other user segment.

(0050) Furthermore, in the publishing system described in Claim 3, the posting forum provision means publicly solicits the themes for discussion and debate, making it possible to gather themes for discussion and debate which persons accessing the posting forum, i.e. the provision means, are broadly interested in, thus allowing for more active collection of more meaningful opinions, etc.

(BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS)

(FIGURE 1) A simplified diagram illustrating an example of embodiment of the publishing system of the present invention.

(FIGURE 2) A drawing illustrating an example of the web page for posting of opinions, assertions, experiential accounts, etc. by a user.

(FIGURE 3) A chart describing an example of the processing sequence of the information processing terminal (client), posting forum provision means (WWW server) and posted data storage means (posting database).

(EXPLANATION OF REFERENCES)

- 1 Publishing system
- 2 Internet (communication network)
- 3 Client (information processing terminal)
- 4 WWW server (posting forum provision means)
- 5 Posting database (posted data storage means)
- 6 Publishing means

7 Publication

FIGURE 1

[see source for figure]

FIGURE 2

[see source for figure]

Name
Pseudonym, if any
Age
Sex Male Female
Profession Corporate employee
Email address
Address
Interests Reading Music Sports
 Travel Food Other
Theme number

<Opinion corner (400 characters or less)>

(FIGURE 3)

[see source for figure]

Client	WWW Server	Posting database
S1	Theme placement	
S2	Theme declaration page request	
S3	Theme declaration page transmission	
S4	Theme declaration page display	
S5	Posting page request	
S6	Posting page transmission	
S7	Posting page display	
S8	Posted data and user information entry	
S9	Transmission of posted data and user information	
S10	Posted data and user information storage request	
S11	Storage of posted data and user information	
S12	Storage notification transmission	
S13	Receipt notification transmission	
S14	Receipt notification display	